

LESSONS FROM BY-ELECTIONS

Recent by-elections were held to 7 parliamentary seats and 11 Assembly seats in 8 States. The Congress (I) led by Rajiv Gandhi, the party ruling at the Centre and in the majority of States, has suffered a debacle, having lost in 3 and trailing behind in 1 (whose result is withheld) out of 6 parliamentary seats and in 5 out of 10 Assembly seats. Repolling has been ordered in a number of booths in two parliamentary and one Assembly seats because of charges of extensive rigging. The scale of debacle would not be apparent so much from the number of seats lost by the Congress (I) as from the intensity of anti-Congress (I) sentiments manifest among the voters, or the people in general, and the circumstances under which the Congress (I) has managed to win some of the seats.

These by-elections, particularly the Allahabad parliamentary by-election which the former Defence Minister of the Rajiv Gandhi Government Mr. V. P. Singh contested and won, have received a very wide coverage in the bourgeois media and speculations have begun on the prospect of a non-Congress ((I) Government at the Centre in the aftermath of the next parliamentary polls. On the other hand, these elections have also revealed the people's desire and their wishes. Beneath the fanfare and glare of the publicity in the bourgeois media there is an unmistakable sign of what the people desire.

This is where lessons of these elections lie—lessons to be drawn by all willing to give a concrete shape to the people's desire and needs, and by the people themselves, too, all over the country.

All would agree that these by-elections have been held at a critical phase of the political situation of the country. There is the deepening crisis of the capitalist economy and also the sustained bid of the Congress (I), being the most trusted political agent of the ruling bourgeoisie, to pass the entire burden of the crisis on to the common people through its anti-people fiscal and economic policies and mea-

asures, and to safeguard the interest of the capitalist class by providing it, at every stage, with subsidies, subventions, cuts and exemptions from various duties and taxes. The bourgeois bid to hoodwink the people by blowing up before them an image of Rajiv Gandhi through its propaganda media ever since he was saddled in power at the Centre four years ago has got exposed by and large as a result of the ruthless and naked anti-people capitalist policies pursued by the Government headed by him. Economic distress, poverty and destitution of the common people have grown without relent and all the promises held out by the Congress(I) during the last parliamentary elections have proved to be a mere hoax. To safeguard the bourgeois class rule amid an ever-deepening all-out crisis, the Rajiv Gandhi Government has been robbing the people of their democratic rights and arming the State to the teeth with draconian laws. To disrupt the people's unity against its anti-people policies, the Congress (I) Government is pandering to the comm-

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actment by which the employees of Hospital and Educational and Research Institutes etc. have been bundled out from the purview of the Industrial Disputes Act and surprisingly it has been brought forth violating the award of the Supreme Court. In the Awards of 1972 and

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Hospital and Other Institutions Bill— Build up Countrywide resistance movement

The Central Congress (I) Government has recently passed a Bill in the Rajya Sabha which envisages to settle the grievances of the employees of hospitals, educational and research institutions, etc. The Bill is awaiting the President's assent after which it will become an Act.

One may recall in this connection that during the rule of the Janata Party at the Centre in 1977, almost a similar Bill was pending for passage through, but which ultimately could not pass through owing to stiff opposition from the working people as a whole. Then again, during Indira Gandhi's regime in 1982, a cluster of black Bills including a Bill titled 'Hospital and other Institutions (Settlement of Disputes) Bill' was introduced in the Lok Sabha. That

black Bill too fell through owing to united opposition of the central trade unions barring the INTUC as also in view of the militant mood of the working people at large to fight it out. Astonishingly very discarded Black Bill with slight amendments here and there has now been passed through the Rajya Sabha in hot haste. It is to be noted that to prepare the ground for introducing this Black Bill, the Industrial Disputes Act had been suitably modified earlier by an en-

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Sustained Movement against unjust Fare-rise in Kerala

The CPI(M)-led LDF Government in Kerala has recently brought down a severe attack on the people of the State by enhancing bus fares steeply in all categories — State, Private, Ordinary, Fast Passenger, City and Express busses. This is for the third time in only 4 years that bus fares have been hiked and the Nayanar Government claiming to be 'pro-people' has at present sharply increased it after coming again to power. The Government is not only violating the election promises of the LDF, like checking price-rise, providing 10 lakh jobs to the unemployed, etc., but also adopting one after another various anti-people measures like its Congress(I) predecessors. It has also increased boat fares and electricity charges and has already declared to enhance shortly building and water taxes. In public utility services like transport and electricity, when it was expected that the Nayanar Government should have felt more concerned for providing relief to the people even through subsidies, if necessary, it is, on the contrary, grabbing profit by fleecing the people to the delight of the private bus owners and the vested interests. To safeguard the people's interest against this anti-people measure, the Kerala State Committee of our party plunged into movement without losing time as soon as the Nayanar Government had declared its decision.

Bus fares have been enhanced in Kerala since 27th May 1988, the increase ranging from 15 per cent to 100 per cent, and reservation charges doubled, with the fares of Fast Passengers increased from

Re. 1 to Rs. 1.50, Expresses from Rs. 3 to Rs. 4, Ordinary Services from average 9 paise to 10.5 paise per km. according to the Government notification,

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Rally in front of the Secretariat in Trivandrum before picketing by SUCI workers began.

Afghan Accord—a Betrayal to Afghan People

Hardly two months had elapsed since the conclusion of the Afghan Accord signed on 14 April in Geneva when the allegations against its violation started pouring in. Mr. Najibullah, the President of Afghanistan, hurled this allegation against Pakistan which was subsequently echoed by the Soviet Government too. They accused Pakistan of continuing to support and supply arms to the Afghan rebels in total contravention of the accord.

Let us start from what this accord is and what did it seek to achieve.

It is known to all that since the Soviet armed invasion in Afghanistan in 1979 in the name of saving 'Afghan Revolution' through a pre-staged friendship treaty entered with Babrak Karmal in Moscow, a resistance was developed within that country by the Mujahidin guerrillas and other rebel groups of heterogeneous composition with direct patronage of the USA and Pakistan. So, despite the deployment of a huge contingent of the Soviet army, the Karmal Government could not extend its jurisdiction much farther than Kabul. The Geneva accord on Afghanistan was aimed at removing this stalemate in that country, restoring peace and normalcy.

The accord stipulated that neither Pakistan nor Afghanistan will interfere into each other's internal affairs, indulge in any conspiratorial activity in each other's territory, transgress border or threaten to do so by force, provide for training of the rebels of the other country in its own territory, etc.

The second chapter relates to the role of the USA and the USSR as guarantors of the accord to ensure that both sides in the accord really implement it. The third chapter enjoins the Afghan Government to open the border for the thirty lakhs of Afghan refugees now sheltered in Pakistan and to arrange their rehabilitation with the help of different international institutions.

The fourth and the most important article in the accord is the withdrawal

of the Soviet army in instalments to be completed within this year under the supervision of a UN delegation.

However, the accord allowed some queer provisions on two very vital questions. One such question was whether the USA and the USSR would henceforth continue the supply of arms and equipment to their respective favourites. The accord did not prohibit this. The USA explained that it would have to go on arming Pakistan and the Afghan guerrillas so long as the Soviet Union would supply arms to the Afghan Government. The Soviet side in its turn pleaded with the same logic for supplying arms to Afghan Government to balance the US help to the Afghan guerrillas. And this mutual arrangement for fire exchange was given a sober term — symmetry.

The second question was: what would be the nature of the Government in Afghanistan following this accord? Will the present People's Democratic Party Government continue to hold the reins or will there be an all-party national Government including even the rebels? This was left out of the accord and postponed to an uncertain future to be decided through discussion among various sides and to be supervised by Mr. Cardovej, the UN observer at the accord table.

In pursuance of the accord, the first batch of the Soviet troops left Kabul on 15 May, 1988 and a second batch also followed the trail within a short time. But in the first week of June the Najibullah Government accused Pakistan of flagrantly violating the

accord and abetting the Afghan rebels till now. Then the Soviet Union's foreign affairs minister Mr. Edward Shevardnadze told the Press: "When we criticize Pakistan for non-compliance, for non-observance of its obligations under the Geneva agreement, we also, of course, have in mind the USA. In Pakistan's violation the USA too bears a portion of responsibility."

"If violations by Pakistan continue," Mr. Shevardnadze said, "then we may have to review the schedule of withdrawal of Soviet troops. . . But that would be an extreme measure and not something we want to do." (The Statesman 12.6.88). As a prompt response, the US administration curtly observed: "If the Soviet Union persists in arms supply, the USA will also do the same." Thus it indirectly substantiated the charge against Pakistan and its support and backing to her.

While they charge and countercharge against one another of contravention of the accord, how can each of them and more particularly the Soviet side, forget the fact that the accord itself left this loophole for such violation, and that, in that sense, any such consequence quite accords with the accord? With the provision for "symmetry" entertained therein, as they did, it required a height of idiocy to expect that the US imperialists would not take advantage of this provision to serve their evil designs and rather refrain from meddling in Afghan affairs. Moreover, if the USA wanted to continue its imperialist machinations in the Afghan hills, making use of the "symmetry" clause — which it surely did — then Pakistan would be the front-pawn. The Soviet Government is not so philistine-packed as being unable to understand or foresee all this. Similarly it could have been well calculated beforehand that unless the question of the form of Government following complete withdrawal of

Soviet troops was properly settled, there could be no peaceful solution — not even a temporary one — of the Afghanistan problem. Each of the contending forces in the country would obviously try to give a trial of strength to make itself felt as the most deserving for the seat of power. The external forces would likewise back up their own favourites and goad them into the bid for power at any cost. Blood-hed and killings — by some in the name of defending "revolution" and by others under other covers — would stain the field. That the Soviet Government did not understand this we cannot believe.

Then why did they approve of and hail such an accord? And now when as an inevitable outcome of this accord, things are taking shape, why do they growl? The face of the US imperialists is too well known to create any illusion that they want a peaceful and amicable settlement of the Afghan question and that is why they agreed to the Geneva Accord on Afghanistan. But was the Soviet Union sincere either in solving this problem when they committed to this accord and consented to withdrawal of the army? And that too without taking into account those above-mentioned loopholes wherethrough the entire content of the accord, if any, was surely being exposed to meaninglessness.

So, will it be an unfounded apprehension if one asserts that both the USA and USSR had sat at the Geneva table as mentors of the two sides — Afghanistan and Pakistan — to persuade them (or pressurise if necessary) to sign the accord simply to satisfy their own pragmatic interests, while appearing as champion of peace before the Afghan people as well as the world?

It is to be noted here that when the Geneva talk was arranged and announced, peace-loving people all over the world had looked

forward to a hopeful development. But as soon as the terms of the accord were made public all such hopes vanished in the air and there was a worldwide reaction that it would simply help to perpetuate the problem under a tacit agreement between the USA and USSR. That this was not merely a cynical speculation but had some salt in it has been proved by the on-going and mounting tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan. But still more dangerous is the consequent frustration in world people's mind about the present and future of the communist movement. People wonder — how could the Soviet Union engage in such power games! And as a result of this sort of activities of hers, communism, the noble ideology inspiring exploited people in all countries is losing its appeals, socialism, the land where the dream of emancipation is materialised and which acts as the bulwark of revolution is losing its credibility. This is where we, the Marxist-Leninists who are trying to keep the flag of revolution flying unfurled are seriously concerned with. That is why we want to analyse below the background of the accord and the immediate urge of the Soviet leadership behind getting it done.

It is now universally known how the Afghan problem which should have been a problem of the Afghan people only has eventually turned into a quadrilateral tangle involving USA-USSR-Pakistan and Afghanistan; and also, why, immediately following the Soviet army invasion into this country, the withdrawal of this army became the focal issue of the Afghan question. Still we think, a brief recapitulation would not be out of place.

In that country, the arch reactionary feudal rule of the king Zahir Shah came to an end in 1973 whereupon Afghanistan declared itself a democratic republic with Md. Daud as the first President. Although politically it was a democratic revolution, it could not, for obvious reason of the Afghan reality obtaining then, lead to a

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AFGHAN ACCORD

cultural-spiritual upheaval throughout the country gradually defeating and eliminating the impact of the mullah-shahi, and religious fundamentalism in the civic life and mental world of the Afghan people at large. The genuine communist forces inside the country had therefore a very important role to play—to develop such a cultural-political democratic movement for complete secularisation and democratization of the society. Secondly, since the USA, alarmed at such mass upsurge in another Asian country of vital geopolitical location, would strive its utmost to contain the democratic movement, boost up the mullahshahi reaction and sabotage any prospect of revolution, they should have alerted the people of the country of such machination too. For both these tasks the communist forces had the responsibility to unite all progressive and democratic forces within their country and develop a united movement.

Side by side, had the Soviet leadership, been truly guided by the spirit of proletarian internationalism they should have extended ideological, moral as well as material help to the communists and progressive forces to carry out this task in Afghanistan. Moreover, they had to uphold the policy of peaceful coexistence in this particular region with such a vigilance that the US imperialist peddlers would find no scope to poke their nose into the internal development of the Afghan revolution, and if they did, would be resisted with all might. This would have ensured the easy and accelerated development of the revolutionary process within the country being free from any external interference and backed by the support of all progressive and communist minded people of the world.

But the CPSU leadership usurped by the revisionists after Stalin's death took a completely different course. Our most beloved leader and teacher, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, in his brilliant exposures of the revisionist

character of the Soviet state and party leadership traced their gradual deterioration from misguiding revolutions in different countries with revisionist theories into active attempts to export and implant 'revolution' of their fancy—either by conspiratorial means of the Trotskyites or by direct involvement—to prove the correctness of their theories. Although each of such previous attempts had abortively failed—in Indonesia, Chile, Portugal etc.—the Khrushchev-Breznev leadership went frantic to establish their case.

Afghanistan became their next testing ground. So, instead of doing what they should have done, the Soviet leadership first attempted the conspiratorial methods by creating a pro-Soviet lobby within the administrative and army personnel and encouraging them to take over power by coup and putsch. Within a short period Daud was dethroned by Nur Muhammad Tarakki through such a military coup, hailed as "April Revolution" of 1978. And the next year he was replaced by Hafizullah Amin. But he also perhaps failed to satisfy the Soviet leadership, which thereby became unsure of their first method and hence decided to take recourse to the second—namely, direct military involvement. And in a quick succession of events, a Babrak Karmal, an exile in Eastern Europe, flew to Kabul by a Soviet plane, proclaimed himself President of Afghanistan, "invited" Soviet army in the country—which rushed in large number and Amin was killed. The Soviet leadership explained that the army invasion was at the "invitation" of the Afghan leadership and became necessary to "save" Afghan revolution from imperialist conspiracies. As soon as the revolutionary force will be consolidated in the country and the forces of reaction under control, the "mission" of the Soviet army will be over and they will march out.

Our party strongly disapproved the theory and

condemned the action in a statement of the Central Committee on 2nd January, 1980. Starting from the fundamental premise of Marxism-Leninism that "internal contradiction is the basis of change and external contradiction is its condition" we then pointed out that the growth, development, success and consolidation of revolution in a given country depends primarily and mainly on the objective conditions of that country as well as the correct ideological-organisational leadership of the revolutionary party of the soil. So it has become a firmly established truth of the science of revolution that revolution cannot be exported or implanted. Coups, putsch and similar conspiratorial means may be much easier a course to resort to as a ploy with the fancy of revolution, but can never be the alternative to building up a revolutionary party, and organising the masses in a conscious action—the real process of carrying out revolution. If not ill-motivated, these attempts at best represent a subjectivist desire and utopian dream to run history on broken wheels, and in the end consume revolutionary energy and potentiality of the masses, to whatever extent it is created in a society; in untimely encounters with the enemy, thus ultimately blocking the real process of revolution.

However, what the Soviet leadership attempted by this military invasion was far more disastrous. They appeared to the Afghan people not as "saviour" of their revolution,—for, a genuine revolution never and nowhere requires any external mentor,—but as an alien power intruding into and occupying their motherland. The rising patriotic feeling of the Afghans was grossly injured and they, in counteraction came out on to the path of resistance. Those reactionary feudal and fundamentalist forces who had earlier been trying to arrest the growth of the progressive movements in Afghanistan, now found in it an opportunity to lead and turn this anti-Soviet occupation national

resistance movement towards their own aims. Patriotism of the Afghan people, as a result, mingled with anti-Sovietism, anti-communism and Islamic fundamentalism. This is how the prospect of people's revolution in Afghanistan was almost buried at the predatory role of the Soviet Union. Whatever had we then apprehended in our observations on this incident (*Proletarian Era*, 15 February, 1980) proved to be true to the letters by later developments.

We had then analysed another point too. Already in the early Seventies, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh pointed out another dangerous trend in the Soviet Union's foreign policy. Proceeding from the revisionist interpretation of the policy of peaceful coexistence as a policy of peaceful competition between the two systems, he showed that the present Soviet leadership was gradually embarking on the path of superpower hegemonism in collusion as well as through contention with the US imperialism. Let there be two chiefs of the two world camps—you and me—and let us carve out our respective 'spheres of influence'; let us honour each other's 'sphere' so that we can 'co-exist' peacefully;—This became their apparent approach to this question. They selected Afghanistan as one additional part of their own sphere of influence, and wanted such people to be in power who would be in their dictates.

But the PDP which had appeared as the ruling party of the new Afghan state not so much through the difficult process of organising the people with a correct line as by adopting the conspiratorial means with Soviet backing and, therefore, has imbibed the Marxist jargons from the Soviet leadership, was fully or mostly influenced by the typical Afghan national sentiment. The impact of the patriotic forces conducting the resistance movement under the leadership of the reactionary circles, on the leaders of the PDP and their personal ambition for power has acted as a deterrent in their complete submission to the Soviet Union, which, therefore sought to replace the 'less-loyal' by a 'more-

loyal' representative through the coups successively, and ultimately felt compelled to subjugate the country by military occupation.

This is how the wrong theory born of revisionism landed them to the position of a predatory invader and military occupier.

Now the question remains: Why the same Soviet leadership has become interested in the withdrawal of their troops? Have they at last come to and realised their mistakes? Do they want to set things right as far as possible?

We are sorry to say 'No' to each of these questions. Analysis of the developments in the USSR, in Afghanistan as well as in the world arena forces us to negate such possibility. As we had then alerted all concerned, the US imperialism made the most of this Soviet move. That same US imperialism, the ring leader of world imperialist gangsterism and piracy all over the world—in Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos, Libya, Cuba, Grenada, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and where not—the same Reagan administration, architect of the star war devices, donned the cloak of peace, freedom and democracy before the world people in condemning Soviet military aggression in Afghanistan. Most of the newly liberated bourgeois national states of Asia and Africa became apprehensive of the USSR and wanted to enhance their military might. The US war-marchants found an expanding market for their long stock-piled and unsold military wares. Pakistan, which was already a major recipient of the US military aids, made Afghanistan a new lever for her further arms decoration. This in turn "worried" our Indian rulers too who also found fresh excuses to purchase and produce more and more weapons and equipments. Moreover the US imperialists, which after its insulting defeat at the Indo-Chinese pacific shores had temporarily ceased fire, reappeared in the world in their predatory role and used the Soviet army occupation in Afghanistan as a ploy to justify each and every case of their renewed aggression, gangsterism, military coups and arms deal.

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Even this kilometrewise rate has no relevance to the vast majority of commuters since a person travelling a short distance will have to pay a minimum 60 paise for Ordinary buses and Rs. 1.50 for Fast buses. The Government is so unscrupulous that of its total fleet of buses it is running only 20 per cent as Ordinary and the rest 80 per cent as Fast, Limited Stop or Express buses. Other devices like 'fare stage' jumps have also been introduced. This is not only the case with the State Transport the Government has also allowed the private bus owners to follow suit.

Like their counterparts in West Bengal headed by Mr. Jyoti Basu, Mr. Nayanar's LDF Government, in increasing bus fares several times, is harping on the same tune to justify their anti-people move. They argue that they are merely executing the directives of the Central Planning Commission and since the Central Congress(I) Government has increased the prices of petrol, spare parts, tyres, etc., in absence of any financial assistance to the Kerala Government and since the Karunakaran Government had already emptied out the Exchequer and plunged the State into huge debts, they have no other alternative than to pull resources this way for sheer existence! What a befitting approach from a 'Leftist' Government and its partners indeed!

The question which inevitably follows is that if the Central Government deprives them of their due then why are they not organizing movements against it? Why not even on behalf of its constituents? On the contrary, professing Marxism why are they at the same time shifting the entire burden of their failure on to the shoulder of the common people? And why the people be made to suffer for any callousness and irresponsibility of any Government — whether it is of Karunakaran or of Nayanar? Moreover, buses are not running on petrol but on diesel. Should we not accuse the Nayanar Government itself of in-

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creasing prices of diesel by 3 paise per litre if at all it be one of the factors for the hike?

They also argue that since the State Transport Corporation is running at loss, it cannot afford to purchase new buses for the convenience of the passengers, it cannot properly pay salary to its employees, so on and so forth. So it could not but increase the fares in the state. But have they honestly probed deep into the cause behind this loss?

men and women from all walks of life and from all the districts of the State. On 27th May, the day of introduction of increased bus and boat fares, hundreds of our comrades, with warm support from a large number of people gathering around, picketed at bus stations and highways in almost all important district towns in addition to small townships. Volunteers blocked bus stations and highways.

by Com. C. K. Lukose, State Secretary of the party, along with members of the State Secretariat and the State Committee marched through the main thoroughfares and as marchers began picketing at the main gate of the Secretariat hundreds of them, including many female comrades, were arrested by the police. Com. Lukose and State Committee members Com. Ravikumar and Com. Ravi were also arrested. Earlier a delegation from the marchers, headed by Comrade

Lukose, had gone to meet the Chief Minister to submit a memorandum, but the Chief Minister did not meet them despite previous notice.

To suppress the movement the police of the Nayanar Government has made lathi charges at different places, arrested hundreds of comrades, harassed and kept them in police custody and in jails for days together and false cases have been instituted against them. Even cadres of CPI(M) and its gangsters joined hands with the police and the administration and in many places made attempts to attack the participants. But our comrades with strong support of the common people foiled all their evil designs.

In this movement the people have found in the SUCI the only force to rise against the injustice and anti-people policies pursued by the Congress(I) and the CPI(M) Governments. The message of the First Congress of the party to build up countrywide movements on the burning issues in the people's life is taking its first concrete shape in this State in this movement launched by the party and is rousing the people to step out to uphold their own cause.



Police charge SUCI picketers in front of Secretariat to remove them forcefully.

How far have they been successful in fighting corruption in the Corporation and inefficiency in the administration? Where lies the justification for maintaining a top heavy administration? How far have they been able to check wastage? If there is really a financial crisis wherefrom did they get Rs. 7 crores for the construction of a building complex as the Corporation's headquarters, a non-productive edifice?

Initiating an intensive campaign through street corner meetings, dharnas, and a massive drive for mass signature collection for a memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister the Kerala State Committee of our party has built up a glorious movement, involving thousands of common

The police arrested hundreds of our comrades including a large number of women and the common people. But nothing could daunt the spirit of the movement and on 7th June the 'Collectorate March' was organised in all district towns and memoranda addressed to the Chief Minister were submitted to the Collectors.

On 20th June hundreds of SUCI volunteers marched to the Secretariat and Assembly Hall in Trivandrum, demanding withdrawal of the measure enhancing bus and boat fares, water charges, building taxes, prices of essential commodities supplied through ration shops and the proposed increase in electricity charges, etc. The procession which was led

Statement from Assam State Committee

Expressing its deep concern at the AGP Government's brutal suppression of movements by the tribal people in Assam, the Assam State Committee of our party, at its meeting on 12th June in Guwahati, observed that, "While an unbridled growth of fissiparous tendencies and separatist forces continue unabated, the Government of Assam, instead of ameliorating the genuine grievances of the tribal people, has chosen the path of brutal suppression of their movement, thereby causing greater alienation of the tribal people which, in its turn, is further hastening the process of disintegration of Assam." The State Committee has called upon the AGP Government to initiate negotiation with all concerned agitating organisations with a view to redressing their grievances.

The State Committee also expressed its grave concern "at the move of the State Government to adopt the 1966 electoral roll as the basic document for revision of electoral rolls in Assam" and, favouring expeditious detection of all foreign nationals and deletion of their names from the electoral rolls demanded that "the 1985 roll should be regarded as the basic document for revision of the voters' list."

Hospital Bill—Resist with all force

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1978 of the Supreme Court, Hospitals, Educational Institutions and those institutions associated with scientific dissemination and research had been declared to be treated as 'Industry' and naturally the employees of these institutions fell under the purview of Industrial Disputes Act. It would be quite in the fitness of things to recall with reverence, in this context, the pioneering role played by Comrade Subodh Banerjee, the departed leader, Member of the Central Committee of the SUCI, who, as Labour Minister of the first United Front Government in West Bengal, to give vent to their legitimate demands and aspirations, prepared a bill in 1969 in the interest of the employees of the Hospitals, Educational, Research and such other institutions after necessary amendment of the Industrial Disputes Act. This bill contemplated hospitals and such other research and scientific institutions as 'Industry' and embodied the right to form union and collective bargaining for such employees and sent it to the President for his assent. But that Bill could not become an Act for want of approval of the President. Neither the Congress(I) Government nor the 'Left Front' Government in the State thereafter ever found time to follow it up enabling it to become an Act. The Bill embracing the vital interest of thousands of employees of these institutions, so long hanging in the balance, ultimately found its echo and recognition in the subsequent Awards of Supreme Court.

Let us now take into account the import of this black Bill. It says, inter alia, in the first place, a Management Council consisting of an equal number of representatives both from the staff side and the authority, will be the arbiter of the disputes arising from both the sides. Only with regard to redressal to salary and allied allowances, working hours, leave and leave salary and retirement benefits, this body will be the sole arbiter. In

the event of its failure to settle these issues satisfactorily, it will be referred to a Board of Adjudication. Whereas the award of this Board will be binding on the staff side, they will have no right to appeal to higher court of law; the authority will have the full right to reject the award of this Board with the approval of the Parliament. Needless to say, the authority will usurp this right of going to the Parliament with the avowed object of "safeguarding public interest vis-a-vis jeopardizing the interest of national economy and social justice". Secondly, in each of these organisations with regard to settle the issues like service conditions, suspension and dismissals, etc., there will be a 'Grievance Redressal Authority' to be constituted of a nominated individual by the authority. Failure on the part of this authority on any such disputed issue will then be referred to an 'Appellate Authority'. This authority is also a nominated body. The staff side will have the right to move yet another higher body of Tribunal composed of nominated personnel against the verdict of its lower body. Here also, the verdict of the Tribunal will be binding on the staff side alone. The management will have the right to move higher courts of law, as usual.

In the third place, although the right to form the union has been admitted, yet through a provision in the Bill the right of the employees of these organisations to agitation, gherao, strike and even work-to-rule has been prohibited during the pendency of any dispute before any of the 'Authorities' so provided for the purpose. Not only participation in any of the form of movements by the employees has been debarred, but even 'encouragement' for and 'instigation' to participation in any of the movements will earn them a penalty of fine up to ten thousand rupees and/or six month imprisonment. It is thus quite clear that through imposing curbs on the different forms of democratic trade union

movements, the right to form union of their choice will thus be reduced to verbosity. Over and above, from the proviso in the Bill discussed hereinbefore, it becomes all the more clear that this Black Bill has been designed to take away the rights of legitimate democratic trade union movement of the employees or hospitals, educational and other allied institutions with an ostensible cause of redressal of their grievances.

One must not lose sight of the dangerous portents associated with this Black Bill. The fascist design behind this Bill is very much ominous in the conduct and behaviour of the Government inasmuch as it manifests itself to the butchery of public interest in the garb of mass sanction!

From the experiences they daily have in the government hospitals and the inhuman behaviour and untold sufferings meted out to them daily, a frame of mind has developed in these helpless sufferers among the common people that the hospital employees are mainly responsible for the prevailing pitiable condition and the plight they suffer off and on in the hospitals. Consequently, they feel that some stringent measures are needed against those for better management and proper medical facilities for treatment, etc. Taking full advantage of the grievances and sufferings of the common people Governments at the Centre or in the States are often heard to argue that no movement would be tolerated in the hospital premises. Same is true in case of educational institutions too. Very rightly the people expect a healthy atmosphere and adequate facilities for education of their wards and a sound education system. Surely an apt question creeps in: is this aspiration of the people synonymous with the aims and objects of the Government ruling our country uninterruptedly for long 40 years after independence? Not at all. No one will deny that the first and foremost obligation lies with the

Government to fulfil the aspirations of the people in this regard. In any civilized country, for such demands and aspirations of the people on the counts of education and health, Governments are put to dock. Here, in our country, faced with this stark reality, the Government is bent on hiding its abject failure, its sectarian character and, above all, its inhuman, criminal apathy and callousness and instead, making its fingers crossed against the very employees of these Institutions as the real culprits and thereby is shifting the grievances of the suffering people on to the shoulders of another section of the common people. A bit pondering over the matter may help allay the confused thinking in the mass mind. What are the expectations of the general people of the government hospitals? They simply want minimum facilities for medical treatment which they seldom receive in the hospitals. Whenever one is in dire need of a bed in the hospital, one won't get it. Whichever — devices, say, x-ray, ECG machine, blood transfusion or any medicines for that matter, are required for one's immediate treatment, an emphatic NO is bound to await him. Who is responsible for such a sorry pass? The Government, or the doctor-nurse-health service staff? Then again, can anyone tell: 'Who is responsible for death of 14 persons caused due to taking poisonous medicine in J. J. Hospital of Maharashtra in 1986? Is it not a fact that the Enquiry Report of Mr. Justice Lentin found guilty of dereliction of duties and responsibilities to the grave detriment of cause of the people right from the Ministers to the high-ups in the government echelons? Despite such palpable implication, how these death merchants are allowed to go scot free? Again, in recent times, yet another ten children died of poisonous medicines in Maharashtra. None can tell who is the real culprit behind it. Who does not know, what an untold suffering and inhuman behaviour is meted out in the government hospitals in West Bengal daily to thousands of people coming

over here just for getting a modicum of medical facilities! Can anyone think of a situation that the doctors themselves of the Medical College and Hospital in Calcutta, got infected with dreaded jaundice after taking drinking water contaminated with this sort of poison? Whom to blame? The Government - authority - combine or the employees? One will surely pause twice to utter such sublime nonsense as to put the burden of it on the employees' democratic trade union movement including their strike struggles for realisation of their just demands!

Had the Central Government came out of its own with a national health policy, made elaborate arrangements, on emergency footing, to provide the hospitals permanently with adequate safe drinking water, minimum facilities for medical treatment, ensured regular supply of medicines as well as various pathological and clinical aids and tests and put up blanket ban, at the same time, on production of those dreaded medicines, already declared prohibitive in different advanced countries, then surely, one would have found the Government discharging its due role in this regard and naturally one could think of the Government pursuing a welfare policy in so far as health sector is concerned. Contrary to it, the reality speaks the other way round.

In West Bengal, when the junior doctors took to the path of struggles in '74 as well as in '83 and '86, they raised pointedly some concrete demands relating to the public health along with their economic demands. Neither the Congress(I) nor the 'Left Front' Governments lent any credence to it. Yet one is taken aback by the perfidious concern expressed by the Governments both at the centre and the state, from time to time, about the damaging effect of the movements launched by the doctors in the hospitals, which needs a bit scrutiny. Even for argument's sake, if one takes into cognizance the number of strike-struggles or vigorous movements at that, waged by the doctors - nurse - health

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AFGHAN ACCORD

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On the other hand, in every international forum Soviet military invasion in Afghanistan was met with utter indignation despite the best efforts of the Soviet allies. The Soviet Union became increasingly isolated in international relations. Within Afghanistan the PDP Government being branded as Soviet Union's puppet could hardly gather popular support behind it. On the contrary, the rebel organisations, whatever the character of their leadership, being in unison with the patriotic aspirations of the people have been steadily gaining strength and ground. In fact, the fifteen hundred thousand strong Soviet army's active presence with oil tanks, rocket and other sophisticated armaments notwithstanding, the Government in Kabul could not still govern more than thirty percent of the Afghanistan territory — that too, at a heavy cost! Forty percent of the total population became refugees — more than half of whom went across the border to Pakistan and Iran, and the rest remained within the country, homeless and insecure. Soviet army also suffered heavy casualties. Afghan economy stood on war footing, ravaged by decade-long civil war. And the Afghan revolution far from being "saved" and "consolidated" lost all possibilities for the time being. The Soviet leadership tried to console the tormented spirit of Afghanistan only by setting up few factories and constructing the roadways and bridges and solaced themselves by inaugurating there monuments in ceremonious functions.

Meanwhile, the loss of lives of the Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan had been creating grievances in the mind of the Soviet citizens. Moreover, the army occupation became an endless drag on the economy of the Soviet Union. So they were groping for an auspicious occasion to announce and execute the withdrawal of troops.

Such an opportunity presented itself when in course of the talks between the USA and USSR over

nuclear disarmament and peace, the US Government made withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan a precondition of concluding any sort of peace treaty. Since 1985 onward both of them approached a concurrence on this question. Babrak Karmal obviously apprehensive of losing control even of Kabul without Soviet protection, expressed his disagreement. As a result he lost the throne still earlier and was replaced by Nazibullah immediately. Nazibullah also, loyal but frightened as he is, rushed to meet Gorbachev at Tashkent shortly before the Geneva talk to be advised how to protect his reign. However, this time the Soviet leadership was so much bent on withdrawal of troops that the foreign affair minister Mr. Shevardnadze delivered a belated sermon: "What kind of Government Afghanistan will have after the removal of Soviet troops is her own internal affair. The fate of an individual is not and cannot be placed above the aspirations of the nation as a whole." Who this 'individual' is can be easily guessed.

Simultaneously, when the Soviet telecamera started displaying the pictures of horrors in the battles in Afghanistan instead of the successes scored by the Soviet military mission there, when Nazibullah proposed for an all-party government inviting, if necessary, Zahir Shah who was overthrown in 1973, to achieve national reunification and announced election, and when in order to induct the orthodox rebels he went as far as to amend the Constitution to declare Islam as a state religion of Afghanistan — all these spoke of the Soviet Union's decision to withdraw her troops — no matter at whatever concessions! Even though the election was a total failure because of the non-participation of the rebels — and who would concede to take a share when he thinks he can get it in full?

And when the US-Pak axis continued arms supply to them nothing could change the mind of the So-

viet leaders! They rather accepted the US-Pak arms supply to the Afghan rebels as a tolerable fact — even in the accord.

Thus those who are trying to describe this withdrawal of Soviet troops as the expected decision of the Soviet leadership often its mission has been fulfilled, Afghanistan revolution having been consolidated and Afghan "Revolutionary Government" standing on solid ground — are singing the old tune oblivious of the change in the concert. The reality in Afghanistan today is: the Government in Kabul is as threatened as, or perhaps more than it was when the Soviet troops were stationed; fundamentalists and reactionary forces hold a much greater sway over the people and the land than before invasion; the US-Pakistan axis is in much better position to meddle into the internal life of Afghanistan. So if the Soviet army invasion was justified and necessary in 1979 — although we think it was neither — its avowed mission being unfulfilled they can back out with no justification, no clear conscience. On the contrary, the very fact that they are withdrawing amidst this reality dazed to the ground all when they had said in support of the armed intervention. Just as they had then sent the troops to satisfy their superpower aspiration, born out of revisionism, in this region, so also they are drawing back the troops at the compulsion of other exigencies, again the outcome of the same revisionist policies. There was no revolutionary objective that day, there is none today. However, an irreparable loss has been inflicted by all these misdeeds of Soviet revisionism on the revolutionary movement in Afghanistan. Today, to the Afghan problem no immediate solution is in sight — accord or no accord.

However, in spite of all this in view, we consider the withdrawal of Soviet army from Afghanistan a good sign — in the sense that the case of Afghanistan may work as an eye opener to them, now or later, and also to those who had imbibed the Soviet revisionist theories in good faith, that it may help to prevent similar follies being committed under false pre-

tensions in future. That is why Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, our beloved General Secretary, in his Report to the First Congress of our party, SUCI held in Calcutta on 25-29 April, 1988, while pointing out that "the intervention of the Soviet army in Afghanistan... inflicted incalculable damage to proletarian internationalism and the internal historical social process of the growth of the working class revolutionary movements in those countries" said "I take this opportunity to welcome the proposal of withdrawal of Soviet army from Afghanistan. But at the same time, we call upon the revolutionary and progressive forces of Afghanistan to create such a congenial atmosphere that ensures the development of the revolutionary working class movement to determine their own destiny on the one hand and guarantee the elimination of all possibility of the come-back of the US puppets and the reactionaries to power, on the other".

In this connection the role played and contemplated by the Indian Government deserves close scrutiny. Many people were perplexed at the sudden activities in the foreign office in Delhi — Mr. Natavar Singh rushing to Rome to meet Zahir Shah, Mr. Nazibullah being invited to Delhi, the Prime Minister's warning against US-Pak conspiracies in Afghanistan, and above all, India's manifest interest in having the accord signed. Some people are alarmed and some others found 'lack of maturity' in Indian foreign policy. On the other hand, the CPI-CPI(M) etc. are quite delighted over this additional evidence of 'anti-imperialist stand' of the Rajiv Government. But what is the real interest of the Government of India in the Afghan affair?

Everybody knows that foreign policy is the extension of internal policy of a Government. Since the Government is the caretaker of the bourgeois state, the internal and foreign policies of the Indian Government represent, in essence, the class aspirations of the Indian bourgeoisie. This Indian bourgeoisie, a homogeneous and much more consolidated class among the bourgeoisie of the newly liberated bourgeois nationalist

states, aspirant to appear as a regional superpower in the Indian subcontinent. Just as they extracted benefits through bargain from both the imperialist and the socialist camps for the speediest possible development of capitalism within the country, so also they are now persuading and pressurising both the two superpowers — the USA and the USSR, two chiefs of the two world camps — so that they recognise India's guardianship in this subcontinent. But counting upon the relative strength of the three sides and the opportunities available, Indian rulers had to move with caution.

That is why, as we had already explained in our columns (P. Era, 15 February 1980), Indian Government did not approve of Soviet army intervention in Afghanistan which was why it had refrained from voting the Soviet Union in the UNO. On the contrary, being afraid of US involvement in Afghanistan through Pakistan, India wanted to move with Soviet support, and so did not condemn it openly. Later, the Indian rulers tried to impress upon the world opinion, much more loudly than even the Soviet leadership, that Soviet troops would be soon withdrawn and the US-Pak involvement in this region was merely delaying it and adding to the tension. The object was to exert pressure on the USA to gradually step back. At the same time they went on persuading the Soviet leadership that unless they withdrew their troops, tension would not be eased in this region and the USA would carry on its military projects here. And once the two superpowers went back, a vast and expanding market of Afghanistan would be opened for India. The successive Soviet-backed governments in Kabul were never, therefore, deprived of India's good wishes.

However, the situation in Afghanistan, far from being eased, became more and more complicated. The expansionist desires of the Indian bourgeoisie could not find scope to be satiated so far. But recently, following India's military engagement in Sri Lanka with overt encouragement of the USA and reluctant

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Lessons From By-Elections

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unal, casteist, parochial, separatist and divisive sentiments, and has appeared today as the architect of the communal, terrorist, separatist and divisive crimes in the country. Any remnants of democratic norms, values and practice are being decimated by this Government. In a word, this Government is instrumental in the hands of the ruling capitalist class in driving the country toward allout, fascism in its bid to sustain the bourgeois class rule. In the course it is undermining totally the relative neutrality of Administration, making Judiciary subservient to Executive and has foisted on the people the new National Policy on Education with the object of regimenting their thought process in favour of a fascist rule. It is moun-

ting onslaughts in the cultural sphere to wreck the moral backbone of the people, the youth in particular, so that they cannot rise in protest.

But with all these fascist drives the ruling class and its most trusted representative the Congress (I), are unable to keep themselves free from the tentacles of the ever-deepening crisis of capitalism which is rocking the system and engendering intense rivalry among the monopoly houses, and squabbles, internecine fights and splits within the Congress (I). Besides all this, the scandal of arms deal and exposure of corruption in high places have landed the Congress (I), its Government and Rajiv Gandhi himself in a deep crisis, resulting in almost total erosion of their credibility and legitimacy. The people

are simmering in discontent today against all these. This is one side of the situation.

On the other side, the Opposition parties are disunited and petty party considerations and personal ambitions of some leaders are coming into conflict again and again with attempts at forging unity of the Opposition parties and forces against the fascist menace posed by the Central Congress (I) Government. Our party has been appealing to all Left, democratic and Opposition parties and forces to forge a broadbased united front on a common programme and code of conduct and launch democratic mass movements throughout the country on the burning problems in the people's life. But no significant response has been forthcoming from these

parties including the CPI(M) and the CPI.

It has to be kept in mind that by-elections were due actually in 40 parliamentary and Assembly constituencies but elections were arranged for 18 constituencies only, obviously as a preemptive measure by the ruling Congress(I). Viewed in the backdrop of the two sides of the present situation, the significance of the by-election results comes out in bold relief.

In the first place, this election result is manifestation of the people's discontent, disaffection and wrath against the Congress-(I) and its Government led by Rajiv Gandhi. This discontent, failing to find a channel in the form of mass movements against the Congress(I) Government because of absence of an Opposition unity and a united broadbased front throughout the country, has sought to express itself through this election result. In fact, inasmuch as Mr. V. P. Singh came to symbolise the people's discontent against Rajiv Gandhi and his Government, the Allahabad by-election result is both a political and moral blow to Rajiv Gandhi, his party and Government.

Secondly, these elections should make it clear even to those who are in despair that the people desire movement. They want to fight and they want the Opposition parties and forces to unite and build up united movements against the Congress(I) Government's anti-people policies and fascist onslaughts. The results show that wherever the Opposition had united and a single Opposition candidate had been fielded, the Congress(I) lost. The Congress(I) could win in Rajasthan because of the disunity and bickerings among the major Opposition parties in disregard to the people's cause. There can be no doubt that had the entire Opposition been united over a common cause — the cause of the people—it could create a stronger expectation and trust among the people, and not only would the election results have been much better for the Opposition, the occasion might very well pave the way for forging the much

cherished broadbased Opposition unity leading ultimately to growth and development of a country-wide mighty democratic mass movement against the fascist menace posed by the Rajiv Gandhi Government.

This is from where the lessons are to be drawn by all aspiring to develop the people's legitimate democratic movements. *First*, the crying need of the hour is a broadbased unity of all Left, democratic and Opposition parties and forces on a common programme and code of conduct to develop and guide the legitimate democratic mass movements against the anti-people fascist policies of the Central Congress(I) Government. *Second*, this unity can be achieved, nurtured and sustained truly if and only when its object is to develop and conduct the people's movements on the burning problems in their life and put pressure upon the government to solve these burning problems. Most of the Opposition parties seem to think in terms of an electoral alliance only and a formula of 'one candidate for one seat' at the next parliamentary polls. But, as past experience has borne out, unity with this object alone cannot be sustained and falls far short of what the people need actually and what they desire.

Reiterating the party's appeal, the Allahabad District committee of the party emphasised, on the eve of the by-election, the urgency of forging Opposition unity not to fight only elections but to develop democratic mass movements also for solving the problems in the people's life. Whatever unity was achieved at these elections should be broadened and consolidated towards this end.

It should also be borne in mind that Opposition unity aiming at advancing the people's cause must be based on an ethical practice. At the elections, too, this ethical practice on the basis of democratic norms and values has to be followed. Can the resort to money, mafia and muscle power at elections, like the Congress(I) is doing, uphold the people's cause, or win their love and respect and maintain unity? Can the practice of caste-

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AFGHAN ACCORD

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support of the Soviet Union, India once again staked her claim as the regional superpower in South-East Asia and started hectic moves centring round the Afghanistan question. India's interest in getting the Geneva accord signed, though revealed later, can be supposed for obvious reason, to have been aroused much earlier and might have played a significant role in executing the accord from behind. Otherwise, how the long-forgotten Zahir Shah could come into the picture and why India went ahead to contact him in Rome — can hardly be explained as chance phenomena. President Najibullah also could well understand that in absence of the Soviet army, with the accord providing the US-Pakistan axis the scope to encourage the rebels, his Government would require a protection, and he sensed Indian rulers' willingness too, in this regard. Hence the mutual talk and friendship-assurance etc. in Delhi. Many quarters are already rife with apprehension, as Mr.

Kuldip Nayar, a noted journalist, recently commented in a Hindi daily of UP that Indian army is going to proxy the Soviet troops in no distant future. Afghans are also quite worried over such a turn of events.

Speculations apart, one thing is clear from the above assessment: There is no trace of anti-imperialist attitude in the Afghan policy of the Indian ruling class. It is actuated solely by the expansionist desires and aspirations of the Indian bourgeoisie. Indian people or Afghanistan people have nothing to do with this economic and political design behind the Indian government's moves. We on behalf of the Indian proletariat and as Marxist-Leninists demand of the Indian Government not to interfere into the internal affairs of any country in any way and by any name, and call upon the Indian people to resist by all means any expansionist move by the govt.

At the same time, we appeal to the

Afghan people in general and the communist and progressive forces of the soil in particular to stand vigilant against any possible intervention by the imperialist forces and more particularly by the US-Pakistan axis, build up broad-based and united democratic movement of all progressive patriotic anti-feudal forces to consummate democratic revolution in all its political-social cultural aspects and determine the destiny of their nation by themselves. In this process, they will have to win over even those who are engaged in the resistance struggle under the leadership of the reactionary fundamentalists, so that the unity of the Afghan people can be achieved through ideological-cultural struggle without any further fratricidal bloodshed among the various section of the population.

Whatever the importance of the accord in ensuring mutual abstention from interference, the Afghanistan problem can be solved only in this way and only by the Afghan people themselves.

HOSPITAL BILL

Rights are linked up with obligation to suffering humanity

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employees alike in all India plane during a given period, are few and far between. Leaving aside, the Junior doctors' historic struggle in West Bengal in 1974, 1983 recorded doctors' strike in West Bengal along with a few other states, while 1986-87 witnessed a month-long doctors' strike on the all-India plane. Then again, 1987 registered doctors' strike in the Railways and Central Government hospitals. Such are the records in the annals of doctors' movements in the hospitals throughout the country ever organised and that too held after 30-35 years of independence. Basing on the experience of these few in-

stances, can there be any person, other than one suffering from infantile disorder, to blame squarely on these democratic trade union movements of the doctors, as a whole, responsible for the prevailing plight of the government hospitals?

Side by side, the Government very often exhorts that the hospitals, educational, research institutions etc., are welfare institutions and hence the employees of these institutions are not at one with those of the workers employed in factories, firms and mines. And this being so, they argue, the employees of these institutions should not be accorded the trade union

right with. One might ask: Why not? Is it not a fact that like the factories, the employees working in those institutions are also governed by the law of wage salary' or the 'employees-authority' relationship? Do not the employees of these institutions need any increase in their wage-salary component with the daily sky-rocketing of prices in the market? Does the Government, of its own, evolve any automatic mechanism whereby wage-salary and service conditions of the employees are so fit in as to satisfy their material needs? If it so happens, why does the question of 'Redressal of grievances' with regard to their salary, leave suspension and dis-

missals, etc., like those of their counterparts in other fields, come in in the Bill framed by the Government itself? Surely, provisions for redressal of grievances in the Bill presuppose existence of disputes with regard to their service conditions, etc. between the employees and the authority. It therefore logically follows that where disputes are very much there concerning their service life where they spend and contribute the best creative part of their life, the employees so engaged naturally would reflect their collective opinion in the matter of safeguarding and advancing their legitimate, collective interests. And herein comes the question of forming 'Union' of their choice reflecting the collective interest of the employees as a means to achieve those ends.

In the face of imminent danger looming large over the fate of the employees of hospitals, educational and research institutions it is high time they were united with other sections of the toiling masses to foil this heinous attempt of the Central Government. They must not forget for a moment that while in struggle against various injustice and onslaughts by the authority they are in a noble profession and their sense of right is inseparably linked up with their obligation to the suffering humanity and toiling millions. They must never allow themselves to lose sight of this high sense of ethics and morality. They can never shirk their responsibility towards the society which they are meant for and in no way make the people suffer. They should always remember that however much powerful their organisations may be, without the support of the common man they cannot come out victorious. So to win them over they will have to free themselves from old habits and attitudes and work with a mind of service and dedication to the people who come daily in their contact for their various needs and go back with a heavy heart of pain, hatred and anger. They must endeavour with care to erase the ill-feelings about them generated among the people and should foster love, affection and brotherly attitude so that at the time of movement however much difficulty the people may fall in, they will take the movement as their own and, we think, it will ultimately save them from various onslaughts of the administration and help them achieve victory.

At the same time we appeal to the people of all walks of life not to be swayed away by this move of the Government to create cleavage in the unity and cohesion of the people so that their sordid game in the name of maintaining discipline and proper atmosphere is exposed and frustrated unitedly.

BY-ELECTION

Unleash counter-current against fascist onslaughts

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based politics, appeal to religious sentiments or recourse to rigging — violent or 'peaceful' — win the people's trust and confidence? Is it possible to maintain unity without the people's moral and active support, let alone advance the people's cause? These by-elections, Allahabad in particular, have stirred up these questions in the minds of democracy-loving people. The Opposition parties and their leaders ought to ponder over these questions at this critical hour.

Another question causing concern to all those who truly view democratic mass movements as the only way before the people to solve the burning problems

in their life is why in West Bengal, once the citadel of Left movement and after more than a decade of rule by the 'Left Front' and in spite of the prevailing anti-Congress(I) current, the CPI(M) lost its seat in Barabani. The people have not certainly voted for the Congress(I) in large numbers favouring the Congress(I)'s policies. From what reaction to the policies of the CPI(M)-led Front for all these years have the people gone to give this verdict? The cadres of the 'Left Front' of the CPI(M) in particular, ought to ponder over this question instead of clutching at some self-deceptive alibi.

The danger looming over the horizon is too dark to be overlooked or be given

a passing glance only. After a host of draconian laws in the space of last four years, the Rajiv Gandhi Government has moved in hot haste now to introduce the 59th Amendment to the Constitution to empower itself to clamp Emergency in any part of the country, ostensibly Punjab, and deny the people the right to life, amend the Arms Act to make its provisions far more stringent, and pass the Hospital and other Institutions Bill to deny doctors, teachers and the employees of the hospitals and educational institutions etc., their basic professional right to protest against injustice, wrongs and authoritarian perpetrations. Only the blind can afford to remain unaware now of these dangerous portents of all-out fascism. All Left, democratic and

Opposition parties and forces, all democracy and peace loving people must now step out and unite on a broadbased platform to resist this fascist menace. The task is to build up people's committees at the grassroot level in every locality which will act as watchdogs against any attempts at betrayal of the people's cause. The task is to organise volunteer corps to help advance the people's movements. The task is to unleash a counter-current against the fascist drive and advance it on all fronts. For all we have inherited from our people's great tradition we owe this much to our posterity. History calls upon us to perform this role. If we will turn away, we will do so to our own peril.

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